

THE ZELATOR RITUAL

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THE first words of instruction given in the Zelator Ritual tell us that "a college of Rosicrucians has authority to admit duly qualified candidates to the membership of the Rosicrucian Society by the ceremony of the First Grade of Zelator." I have commenced my paper by quoting this, as I think it will enable me to bring before you what I feel to be the important aspects of the Ritual if I begin with a short statement of what are the necessary qualifications for a candidate. Two words only of the sentence I have quoted need explanation. What is a "duly qualified" candidate? Section II of the ordinances tell us that he "must be a master mason of a regular lodge under the Grand Lodge of England or under a jurisdiction in amity therewith." One wonders why, as the Society is essentially Christian, its members are selected only from an order which does not exclude any intelligent man other than a professed atheist, whose integrity and suitability is vouched for. In a paper by Dr. Wynn Westcott entitled "the Rosicrucian Society of England," which appears in the TRANSACTIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN COLLEGE, 1915, it is stated that at the constitution of the Society in Anglia it was decided to make it consist solely of Freemasons, although it was recognised that on the Continent many groups of Rosicrucian initiates and adepts had admitted men who were not Freemasons, and even learned women, to their grades and assemblies. It was felt in England that, as a revival of Rosicrucian Fellowship which was active about 1835, and which recognized only men as its members, it was not desirable to make a new departure; and in addition, it was felt that the Masonic Initiation provided an acknowledgment of a personal dedication to fellowship, mutual service and progress in learning which must serve as a desirable basis for Rosicrucian studies whether theoretical or practical. In "An Historical Notice of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia," by the late Supreme Magus, which will be found in the second bound volume of the METROPOLITAN COLLEGE TRANSACTIONS, I find another reference, viz.: "The basic rule of the new Society stated that only M.Ms. of good standing and repute should be admitted to membership, thus drawing a new distinction of which we have no previous record; for earlier English Rosicrucian

Colleges had no Masonic basis, and some fraternities abroad certainly admitted women on equal terms."

I cannot find any further reference to the Masonic qualification beyond a statement in *Clavicula* I, to the effect that those who have already entered the Masonic Brotherhood have learned the true meaning of squares, levels and perpendiculars. From this it would seem that the idea in limiting membership to M.Ms. is to secure that all members of the Society should have served their initiation in Masonic knowledge, and so be prepared for further study and progress. Apparently, as there is nothing in the By-laws to the contrary, it is necessary only to be a subscribing member of a Craft lodge when joining a College. It is not made compulsory for Zelatores to resign on their ceasing to hold this qualification, and there does not seem to be any reason why a Frater should be expelled because he has ceased to be an active Mason, as he still retains the reasons why that qualification was demanded on joining the Society, and from time to time there may be valued Fratres who, by reason of scanty means, have been unable to retain their position in the craft.

The ordinance goes on to say "He must be a man of sufficient ability to be capable of understanding the revelations of philosophy, theosophy and science, and possessing a mind free from prejudice, and anxious for instruction; he must hold the fundamental principles of the Christian doctrine, be a true philanthropist, and a loyal subject." There is little to consider in this. Possibly the "fundamental principles of Christian doctrine" may excite some minds, but I am not going to give rise to a theological argument. I may point out, however, that two fundamental principles are brought out in our Ritual—the Godhead of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

We are now working on the fourth reprint of the first printed Ritual, dated 1881, though there were several MS. versions before this date. The later reprints do not vary to any extent, and from the first only in point of arrangement; the second reprint of 1890 is practically the same as the first. In a paper by Dr. Wynn Westcott, which I have seen, I find that he states, on the authority of Frater Wentworth Little, the first ruler of the Society as we now have it in England, that there were Rosicrucian Rituals in the vaults of Freemasons' Hall in 1860, and from these the Rosicrucian English Zelator Ritual was rewritten (see page 6, MS. notes in Library). In another paper by the late S.M., which appears in the *TRANSACTIONS* of 1887-8, he states: "The Fratres may rest assured that the present Zelator ceremony is essentially of ancient date, although it is that this English High Council is not at liberty to make its complete genealogy public." In some notes made by the late S.M. on this paper, when I first read it to the study group, he says:

few members, and fewer still who were well skilled in Ritual, and as a consequence simplicity was desirable. Moreover, many Colleges could not rely on a Herald as an additional performer, and so the next phrase, "Unto God who giveth joy to my Youth," is now spoken in continuous phrase. The late S.M. further points out that these words open the Roman Catholic service of the Mass, "Introit ad altare Dei." The response does not follow the first sentence, in the Psalms. Another reason for making a change in the mode of recitation, if not in the actual words, is that the "Confessio Fraternitatis" is a document acknowledging the Reformed Christian Faith.

Another matter of interest is a recent change. The third Ritual, published in 1906, contains a description of the Jewel of the Society given by the Celebrant when he invests the newly admitted Frater. This is entirely absent from the first and second Rituals of 1881 and 1890. The late S.M. points out that it was always a duty to invest the Zelator with the Jewel, whose manufacture dates back to the year 1867, but in early times the description was given in each Celebrant's own words, until at last it was deemed proper to dictate in print a correct form of words for general use.

In the fourth Ritual, now issued, there are two changes. The square in the centre of the Jewel is described in the third Ritual as representing "The Holy Oblation or the square of the Universe." The words "The Holy Oblation" are omitted from the new Ritual, possibly because the connection was somewhat obscure. I confess that, when I first came across these words, I could not visualize the Holy Oblation with the square of the Universe, but the rather involved connection is somewhat explained by reading the 43rd and 45th chapters of Ezekiel.

The other change is the omission of the words "the seal of Solomon" in the description of the Pentagram. Some authorities hold that the Hexagram, otherwise known as the Shield of David, was also known as the Seal of Solomon. But others maintain that the true Seal of Solomon was the Pentagram, and when the fourth edition of the Ritual was prepared, the late S.M.—Dr. Wynn Westcott—as the Supreme authority in matters of Ritual, decided upon the omission of the words "the Seal of Solomon" as a description of the Pentagram, in order to obviate the introduction of an apparently authoritative statement on a matter of controversy. There is a point not found or written in printed English Ritual which has been lost, though it appears in the designs of an American Ritual, which I will refer to later. The late S.M. says "that the loss is a pity—but it was lost for convenience sake." The Zelator used to be led to and fro in a serpentine path among the pillars instead of around them all as a group. It suggested the Serpent of Wisdom climbing up from the Earth, the first Ancient, and Heh final of

Jehovah, to the Yod of Fire in the East before the Altar. Another point in the early edition of the Zelator Ritual which was erased by the late S.M. is the allusion to the Life of Sethos, an Egyptian Prince. Dr. Wynn Westcott said that this was introduced by the compilers of the earlier Rituals, who were under the erroneous impression that Sethos was an historical person, whereas he was in fact only a character in a novel in which the Egyptian details were based on the scanty knowledge of Egyptian law which was available at that time."

There is no mention of a Jewel in the first and second Ritual.

Before we further consider the Ritual itself, I think here we may well pause for some consideration of the setting. The candidate has entered the Temple. It is true he is in darkness, but he is being conducted into a building and through a ceremony, and every step he takes leads him to some symbolic mystery. In the East there is an altar, upon which should be a super-altar of three steps, painted white, and upon it a black crucifixion Cross. Upon the Cross is an inscription; and red roses are twined around the Cross. On the Altar are 33 lights, to remind us of the 33 years spent on earth by the Saviour. The black Cross reminds us of His crucifixion, and the red roses signify silence, beauty and love. There is no need to elaborate the symbolism of the Rose, as we have in the 1920 TRANSACTIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN COLLEGE an exhaustive paper by Dr. Wynn Westcott on this subject. A chair for the S.M., or chief adept, is placed on the North side of the Altar, one for the Celebrant on the South side, and there is a kneeling stool before it. I understand from the late S.M. that the present arrangement as to the relative positions of the Magus and Celebrant arose some 30 years ago—"by reason of expediency." At first the Celebrant sat in the centre of the East, and the Altar was in the North-East, on his right, and no position was set apart for the S.M. The present arrangement is much better, and it is certainly more decent to put the Altar in the East than in a corner of the Temple.

The Symbolism of the Four Ancients is of particular importance in the Ritual. In the first part of the Ritual their pillars are placed in a straight line from East to West in this order—Fire painted red, Water painted blue, Air painted yellow, and Earth painted black. They preside over the elemental tests, by the symbolical passing through which alone the Candidate becomes entitled to kneel before the Altar of Light, and to join in the mystic labours of the Order. Here, again, Fratres already have, in *Clavicula*, II, a paper giving an explanation of these four important officers.

The Metropolitan College seems to be unique in having Seven Ancients instead of Four; apparently, by its position as the Premier College, as I see that in America the officers of the High Council include Seven Ancients, though the Colleges are limited to Four.

Recently the M.W.S.M. suggested that the seven had some reference to the seven associates of our Founder.

Dr. Wynn Westcott's note in reference to this is that the Seven Ancients were reduced to Four because so many Colleges could not produce seven eminent persons ; also we could not invent seven Elements for them to represent, and to make them seven Planets would upset the whole ideal of the Elementary Nature of this world.

Another matter which calls for comment is the title "Celebrant." In the 1881 Ritual the word used is "Celebrant." In the 1890 Ritual we find "Master of the Temple" used. In the Transactions of the Metropolitan College, from 1885 the term used is "Master of the Temple," up to 9th July, 1891, when we first have "Celebrant." Then we have a few references to "Master of the College," "Celebrant or Master," "Master or Celebrant," until we come finally to "Celebrant." Why the change I do not know. Why the Ritual of 1881 should use the term we use to-day and the College Transactions another, which was adopted in the Ritual of 1890, and apparently almost immediately abandoned in favour of that used in the older Ritual, I do not know. Why the Metropolitan College used a title not in the Ritual of 1881, until it was adopted in the Ritual of 1890, and then promptly used the older title, I do not know. Up to 1909 "Deputy" was used for Exponent, which we first find in the Metropolitan College Transactions of 1910.

Dr. Wynn Westcott's note in regard to this matter is "the title of Celebrant was dropped by reason of the argument that a Frater who had attained to that office was worthy of the 8th Grade of Master, and in the Metropolitan College received it. Then there came a discussion whether all Celebrants should be made Masters ; this was voted upon many years ago, and the Motion was lost. The question arose again later, and was again lost. Then, as every Chairman was not to be a 'Master,' the title properly reverted to 'Celebrant'—'Exponent' replaced 'Deputy'—because the Frater seated in the West never was a Deputy to the Chairman of the Meeting ; in the Celebrant's absence a Magus or a Past Celebrant always presided—so that was a change due to common sense and simple fact."

The Zelator Grade has a special significance, as by its admission is given into a Christian Society for self-improvement, for development of intellect, the culture of higher self, and for service to others. In the ceremony of admission it is suggested to the Candidate that he may observe a resemblance to the procedure of the Ancient Mysteries. This presupposes some knowledge of the religions of Egypt and Greece of the pre-Christian era. These several points should be borne in mind in any consideration of the Ritual.

There is one other matter which I may mention before I leave this part of my paper. We make considerable use of symbols to impress the imagination with the reality of what we are doing. The name of our Founder is a symbolic one. In the days in which he lived it was the custom for all leaders of thought, particularly of religious thought, to take a new name. For instance, the Popes, on their ascending the Chair of St. Peter, assumed a new name, as they do to this day; and the same applies then and now to the religious orders. All fully developed religious systems have had recourse to symbols for the expression of religious and ethical ideas. So we have a motto by which we are known in the Society and the M—T— is burnt by the Torch Bearer as a symbol as to what may happen to us if we fall or violate our obligation, even as the flourishing vine of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxx. 16) was burnt with fire and cut down.

I have compared our Ritual with a MS. Scotch Ritual which is marked "adjusted at a Council held in Edinburgh, 19 Jan., 1866," and with a copy of an original American Ritual, and I will occupy the remainder of my time in drawing your attention to differences, some of working, and some of arrangement. By this means we will see by illustration from another wording the points of difference.

The Scotch Ritual, now in use, is, by the terms of the Concordat, the same as our own, and I understand that the order in America is also adopting our Ritual. The Scotch Ritual in use before the Concordat does not help us much; the differences lie in the older Ritual which I have mentioned. Two points, however, may be of interest. The first Ancient is instructed to use sand instead of earth, as in our Ritual, and to place it on the lips of the Aspirant, not in the palm of his hand. The late S.M. says, in regard to this, "Surely both equally represent 'material earth' which the Alchymic Element Earth referred to; i.e. solid matter, not aeriform watery or fiery. Here, again, 'sand' was put for earth, because of the wise suggestion to go to the kitchen to get 'silver sand' of household usage, and not to the garden to get garden mould—which may taste of manure."

The other point is in the second part of the Ritual. The Aspirant is led to the Altar by four steps instead of seven, as is our custom. The four steps representing the Tetragrammaton.

This older Ritual was believed by Dr. Wynn Westcott to belong to the first attempt to carry on a Scotch Society under O'Neil Hays, who produced it. It contains only ten paragraphs identical with ours. Dr. Wynn Westcott states:—

"The eminent Frater W. J. Hugham informed me (and you will find the matter referred to in my 'History of our Society'), and his account was conformed by my old friend,

R. W. Brown, the Grand Scribe E. of Scotland, that this foundation collapsed very soon, and it was not until some years later that the present S.R.I.S. started with practically our own Ritual ; and my old friend, C. F. Matier, was an S.M. of it, as well as a Frater in Anglia, and he it was who invested me as S.M."

The differences lie mainly in arrangement. The officers are nine—the Celebrant, Suffragan, Cantor, Master of Novices, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Guards. There are no Ancients. The candidate is blindfolded, as with us, and there is an interesting note on this. It states that the action is typical of the ignorance with which man comes into the world, and the Aspirant into the Order—his utter helplessness and dependence ; while the unveiling typifies the claim of Reason and the necessity for light to raise the Candidate out of the slough of darkness. The Celebrant meets the Aspirant at the Porch and takes him by the hand, saying, "I will go unto the Altar of God." He then reads Eccl. xii. 1-7, chosen because it sums up briefly the last stages of life. "No one can start clearly on the journey of existence unless he keeps clearly before him the goal to which he is proceeding." The Celebrant then immediately proceeds with a ceremony called "Baptism of Air." This is very elaborate, and in addition to lengthy explanatory addresses, there are prayers and a reading of Scripture. In a note at the end of the book it is explained that this ceremony is in reference to the purification by the means of God the Father breathing upon the Candidate, and the note goes on to say "that it further invites him to enlarge his mind by seeing the stars of the sky and their celestial phenomena, whose consistency of action proves beyond doubt the great wise purpose of One Great Being."

The Baptism by Water is also conducted by the Celebrant, and here, again, there is a service of some length. The Candidate is made to renounce Satan, his works, his pomps, and to declare his belief in God. He is then asked if he will be baptised, and, on his answering, is sprinkled with water "in the name of God and the Light."

The Baptism of Water is explained in a note as referring to the purifying of the Spirit by means of prayer and humility.

The Baptism of Fire follows, and in this ceremony a lock of the Candidate's hair is burnt, as a symbol of severance from the Children of Evil. "It is taken from the head because it is the noblest part of man. It is burnt that the Aspirant may know that, like it, should he prove unfaithful to the trust imposed in him, he will be put out and disappear from among the Brotherhood. The burning of a lock of hair is one of the most ancient of ceremonies,

and typifies the commencement of a new life with new hopes and aspirations."

It is impossible for me to compare the ceremonies more fully in this paper. As you have seen, they differ considerably from ours, but the substance of both is the same.

The qualifications of a Candidate are not quite the same, as apparently the M.M. qualification is unnecessary. They are :—

1. Of years of intelligence capable of understanding the doctrines.
2. Of good moral character, truthful, faithful, intelligent.
3. Of good abilities and well-educated or anxious for education.
4. Of a mind free from prejudice and anxious for instruction.
5. Of a belief in the Eternal, Omnipotent, Beneficent Being.

The first American Ritual varies, again, considerably from ours, but not to such a great extent. It is very much more elaborate, and is supplemented by odes and an historical lecture of much interest. The lecture on numbers is omitted, as it was felt by the compilers that "it was valueless to anyone not prepared for a study of the mysteries, and too short and bald to be of much assistance to anyone really disposed to investigate the unknown." The Aspirant is not blindfolded, but he has a scarlet veil thrown over his head, while the C. of N. is robed in a black robe with cowl, which he wears over his head. The entry of the Candidate is impressive, as he is led into the Temple in procession. Two Heralds precede him, walking abreast, and he is led by the C. of N., while the Torch bearer follows. This procession circuits the Temple five times, while all the Fratres stand, and an ode is sung, which is of such significance that I venture to quote it.

" Ere God the Universe began,
 In one rude heap all matter lay,
 Which wild disorder overran ;
 Nor knew of light one glimmering ray ;
 While in darkness o'er the whole
 Confusion reigned without control :
 Then God arose, his thunders hurl'd,
 And bade the elements arise.
 In air he hung the pendant world,
 And o'er it spread the azure skies ;
 Stars in circles caused to run,
 And in the centre fixed the Sun ;
 Then man he called forth out of dust,
 And formed him with a living soul ;
 All things committed to his trust,
 And made him lord of all—the whole .

But yet ungrateful unto Heaven
 He proved, and was from Eden driven :
 From thence proceeded all our woes
 Nor could mankind one comfort share
 Until the Rosicrucians rose
 And formed another Eden here ;
 Where true pleasure ever reigns,
 And native innocence regains ;
 Here crystal fountains bubbling flow,
 Here nought that vile can enter in ;
 The tree of knowledge here doth grow,
 Whose fruit we grow—yet free from sin ;
 While sweet friendship does abound,
 And Guardian Angels hover round.”

During this period the Celebrant is hidden behind a curtain, and when light is revealed the curtain is torn aside, the scarlet veil removed, and the Aspirant perceives the Celebrant in the East in front of the Altar.

The Aspirant is more humble than we are accustomed to, inasmuch as he “ beseeches ” to be received and does not command.

Again, in this Ritual the First Ancient applies “ clean earth ” to the lips of the Aspirant.

Another difference is that, instead of the Aspirant being invested with a White Robe, a Crimson one is used and the words are said :—

“ Receive and be invested with the Crimson Robe, token of your ardour, zeal and promised devotion to the Rosicrucian Order.”

Other points of difference are the use of a triangular paper token, and the Four Ancients do not change their position in the second part, as in our Ritual.

In June, 1921, another American Ritual was presented to the High Council by M.W. Frater E. H. Holton, S.M., of America. The Ritual is stated to be an early MS. Ritual in use in America, and is dated 20th July, 1881, and signed by E. S. Meyer, S.M., and C. T. McClenachan, Secretary-General. There are several small differences ; for instance, instead of clasping hands in the M.C., the Fratres place their right hand on the shoulder of the Brother next to them, but join hands when they kneel. Another small matter is that, in the opening and closing, the word “ Brethren ” is used instead of Fratres. After receiving the signs in the second part of the Ritual, the Aspirant is asked to attend to the history of the friendship of D. and J., and the Chaplain reads 1 Sam. xx

28-35. The Celebrant then directs the attention of the Aspirant to the touching account of this friendship, which is intended to impress upon our hearts the reality of the bond into which we have entered, as Children of Light. It teaches us not only to encourage our Brethren in every good work, but also to warn them against the commission of acts which might bring dishonour or discredit upon themselves or upon the Order in general.

In addition to the signs given in our Ritual, certain additional affirmative and negative signs are given, the negative to be used when it is desired to dissuade a Brother from proceeding in any course which may be considered detrimental to his own true interests or to the dignity of the Society in general.

Fratres, I have tried rather to bring before you the teaching that underlies the Zelator Ritual than an exact criticism of its form and words. I have not touched upon the mystical side in this paper, but rather the historical.